

Like A Toddler

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[0 : 00] Psalm 131, a song of ascents of David. O Lord, my heart is not lifted up. My eyes are not raised too high.

I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.

Like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. As I mentioned, this is one of my favorite psalms because it highlights what we so love about God and also what our soul so desperately needs, what our souls need.

And namely, it teaches us that we should humble ourselves before the Lord in quietness of trust. In three verses, verse 1 speaks of lowering ourselves.

Verse 2 speaks of quieting ourselves. Verse 3 speaks of hoping in the Lord. First, the psalmist speaks of lowering ourselves before God. Verse 1, O Lord, my heart is not lifted up.

[1 : 15] My eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. So the three parallel expressions there all in verse 1, they all speak of humbling ourselves before God.

Our heart should not be lifted up before God. Our eyes should not be raised too high. And we should not occupy ourselves with things too great and too marvelous for us. I was reading Deuteronomy 29 recently.

Verse 29 says, The secret things belong to the Lord our God. But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

There are things that God has hidden from us. There are things that are beyond our knowledge and experience. There are things that are not revealed to us in God's word because we do not need to preoccupy ourselves with them.

And how often are we filled with fear and anxiety because we are preoccupied with burdens that God never intended for us to bear. God commands us to share the gospel faithfully and to entrust to Him the fruitfulness of our ministry.

[2 : 23] But how often we are unduly deflated by the seeming failure of our gospel sharing or unduly inflated by its seeming success, right?

God commands us to love Him with all of our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves in the midst of this pandemic too. That's what God calls us to do. But how often are we preoccupied more with what our government is doing or not doing?

How often are we preoccupied with how long this pandemic will last over which we have no control apart from acting responsibly for ourselves? God calls us to live faithfully today because each day has enough trouble of its own.

But how often do we preoccupy ourselves with tomorrow? When we lift up our hearts and raise our eyes too high and occupy ourselves with things that are too great and too marvelous for us, then we get overwhelmed because ultimately we're trying to be God.

And being God is impossibly overwhelming to human beings. So we should instead humble ourselves before the Lord in quietness of trust. And the quietness of trust is depicted in verse 2 this way, But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.

[3 : 41] Like a weaned child is my soul within me. Back in the ancient world, children were breastfed for usually three years. I know that sounds like an extraordinarily long amount of time for nowadays.

So a freshly weaned child would be about three years old, which is about the age of Inji, my second daughter. And she walks and runs around fairly well, but she's still clumsy, falls often.

She certainly can't walk for very long, so she needs to be carried on longer walks. When I take her outside, I still hold her hand while walking or carry her because she stumbles a lot.

And she's not shy about asking for help. She's keenly aware of her limitations, especially because she has a sister who's three years older and is therefore more competent than her in almost every way.

So she often says things like, you know, I don't know how to do that or I'm not old enough to do it. And she asks me for help. When she's afraid, if there's a scary scene in a movie or if there's a dog approaching out in the park, she comes to me and grabs hold of my leg or arm.

[4 : 54] And so all of these, this is what a weaned child does. In such a way, we have to calm and quiet our souls like a weaned child with its mother.

The contrast between verse 1 and verse 2 is so instructive because pride is busy. Humility is calm. Pride inserts itself into every matter.

Humility entrusts all matters to God. Pride presumes to be God-like. Humility assumes a childlike posture. The psalm reminds me of Matthew 14, 20-33 when Peter's walking on the water at Jesus' invitation.

It says, Jesus said, Come. And so Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.

And Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? So when he walked out with faith in Jesus, Peter was fine.

[6 : 03] But when his eyes wandered to the waves caused by the wind, he became afraid and began to sink. It's actually kind of comical if you think about it. He becomes afraid after seeing the wind, as if in calmer conditions he would have had no trouble walking on water.

He has no business walking on water from the beginning, right? It's all because of Jesus that he's walking on the water in the first place. And yet he worries about the wind and the waves as if that's something he needs to control.

But that's exactly what we do sometimes in our own lives. Like we were saved by grace through faith. And yet we think that we stay in God's good graces by our own works.

Right? God graciously equipped us with abilities and opportunities so that we have the jobs that we have and the resources that we have. And yet we think and act like we have arrived by our own strength. Like we need to preserve it and hold on to it and cling to it with our own resourcefulness and hard work.

Instead, we should humble ourselves before the Lord in quietness of trust. That's what the psalm is talking about. And we have a perfect example and fulfillment of this in our Lord Jesus. In 1 Peter chapter 2, it tells believers to endure suffering while doing good.

[7 : 25] And he says that this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. And why is this a gracious thing? Why is this pleasing to God? And he says, it's because Christ also suffered for you.

Leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten.

But continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

So Jesus, notwithstanding the fact that he was the Son of God, notwithstanding the fact that he was the Messianic King, notwithstanding the fact that he was perfectly righteous, he endured unjust suffering because he continued entrusting himself to his Father who judges justly.

Even when he was charged as guilty, by a sham of a trial, even when he was crucified for the sins of others, when he was perfectly innocent, he said to himself, my father's got this.

[8 : 33] My father's got this and I can be like a weaned child before him. He humbled himself before God in quietness and trust. And as a result, he was exalted above all other names.

As a result of this, God's people, we were redeemed from slavery to sin and death. And so, we are to follow the pattern set by Christ.

Instead of exalting ourselves, instead of taking things into our own hands, we are to learn to humble ourselves before the Lord in quietness of trust. And that's how the psalm concludes in verse 3.

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. If you notice, this psalm began by calling upon the Lord, O Lord, and concludes with hope in the Lord.

God is to be our eternal hope and we are to invite others to join in placing all our hope in God as well. That's what this psalm is doing. So let's ask ourselves, are we exhorting one another to put our hope in God or in other things?

[9 : 36] When we are counseling one another, when we are giving advice to one another, when we are consoling one another in the various sins and sufferings of our lives, what do we point each other to?

Do we point one another to our own resilience, our own resourcefulness, or to other people, or to some vague assurance that everything is going to be okay? Instead, we should say, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

Entrust yourself to Him in quietness and trust. Do not be haughty, don't raise your eyes, don't lift up your heart. Lower yourself before God and be contented in His care and His providence.

I think that's the message of the psalm. I think it's very relevant because our natural, sinful human tendency is to seek independence and self-sufficiency.

But there is a sweetness to being entrusted completely to the care of our Heavenly Father this way.